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WASHINGTON

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**FAX TRANSMISSION**

**CQ71**

**TO: NEPA Task Force**

**FROM: Kevin McCarthy - White Pass Company**

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**AUG 22 2002**

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CQ71

August 20, 2002

NEPA Task Force  
PO Box 221150  
Salt Lake City, UT 84122

Re: NEPA Process

Dear Task Force:

First of all I would like to not repeat the National Ski Areas Association (NSAA) letter sent July 31, 2002, yet wish to support the core problems with the process the letter highlights.

As I look back on NEPA documents the White Pass Ski Area has been involved in, one alarming fact always comes to mind and that is: the true issues are always known before the process begins and they are often times social. Therefore, we spend an inordinate amount of time and money defending and analyzing the plethora of insignificant issues raised by an opponent in the hopes of a procedural mistake. Many times the true reason for opposing an action is never stated or analyzed because there are no regulations or laws we can attach to social reason. A good ID Team knows the true reasons behind opposition to a project and also knows what issues need be analyzed. We need government regulations to be rewritten to streamline issue designation and specifically support the ID Team. Concurrently, we need the courts to recognize and support a streamlined more direct process.

An example of the need to streamline is the expansion project at White Pass. An area adjacent to White Pass was removed from Wilderness for the expressed reason of ski area development. The United States Congress removed this area from Wilderness for ski area development. Yet following an EA and two EIS' we find ourselves writing a third EIS, and at no point has the true reason for the opposition been addressed or analyzed. The initial opponents of White Pass' action are not environmentalists but rather backcountry skiers who do not want to share the area with lift served skiers. Yet during analysis every specialist under the sun with his or her volumes of regulation was brought into the project. The noted exception is a social discussion with weight both in the document and in the courts. The exceptional number of specialists required to contribute to a document not only costs time and money but allows for a greater chance of a procedural mistake, which is what has happened to White Pass over the course of this project.

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The process is truly "Analysis Paralysis" and is unfair to the American public and the U.S. Government. White Pass wishes to build another chairlift, however, the frustration of the thousands of American public that have endured this process is criminal. You will never hear from them because they are not organized like opposition groups, and they never will be organized because they find this method of operation to be so contrary to their sense of decency and fair play that they cannot embrace it. However, you must realize that I could have 20,000 signatures to this letter from frustrated public looking for a process that looks at the facts, examines the issues and then makes a fair decision. The process has ultimately cheated the public out of access to their lands.

The process has been written to support delays. Reduce scooping, eliminate the appeals process (it has become only another means of delay) and allow the ID Team or Responsible Official to direct the scope of analysis to the pertinent issues.

I believe the argument for dramatic change in NEPA stands on its own without a discussion on cost; however, it is an issue, which must be addressed. Presently, a large Master Plan EIS will cost \$2,000,000 - \$3,000,000, with small one lift environmental documents costing \$250,000 - \$400,000. No ski resort, regardless of its size, can spend \$2 - 3 million and not feel its effect on business operations, employment, facilities upgrades and the like. To compound the dilemma, many small ski areas spend as much on the environmental document as the lift or wastewater facility will cost to construct and then find them unable to construct the project due to financial limitations.

The solution always comes down to streamlining the process to arrive at a decision; I might add the same decision, in much less time without employing the resources and time of unnecessary individuals.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond.

Sincerely,



Kevin McCarthy  
Pres./Gen. Mgr.